

# Peek into life of artist

Painter John Maitland has drawn on his family as inspiration for his latest exhibition, writes **Ronnie Girdham**

JOHN Maitland's five offspring and eight grandchildren are the models for his latest collection of works, although you won't recognise them by face.

Rather, you'll recognise them by their celebration of life and obvious enjoyment of their surroundings.

His characters are faceless but clearly elegant and exuberant in joyful colours, seemingly skipping through the days at parties and picnics and playing games with their youngsters.

But a sad event recently had a marked impact on one of Maitland's works, depicting his daughter and son-in-law, whose daughter was born blind.

"I called the painting *Young Lovers*. It shows how they clung to each other, how they've bonded through the ordeal, and it had quite an effect on me," he said.

"She's a beautiful child, she's 10 months old. She's had a series of operations and she can see now."

Maitland works in oils and acrylics on canvas, often blending in sand and little bits of paper or plastic to give an extra texture.

His new exhibition of 30 paintings, entitled *Pure Gold*, opens soon in Brisbane.

"There's a lot of hand work (stretching) the canvas and I leave it in the hot sun to weather it, to give it an edged effect," he says.

"I can spend two weeks preparing the canvas



and finding the objets d'art but then I'll attack it with vigour and energy and I'll get an emotional entanglement in it.

"I work in a large double garage at our home at Elanora (Gold Coast) but it's full, and the house is full of my paintings. My wife Doloras made a strong suggestion and I'll be building a studio soon!

"I can work for hours out there until I'm happy with a painting and then something will click, the inspiration is there and I'll finish it. There could be months between starting and finishing."

And if he feels the need to walk away for a break, a brisk swim across nearby Tallebudgera Creek clears his head and refreshes the artist.

Now in his mid-50s, Maitland was born in the north of England, coming to Australia 28 years ago.

He has been showing his work in England and Australia since the mid-70s and has completed many private, church and corporate commissions. More recently his work has been heralded in the US, Canada and Europe.

Another collection will be seen during the

**Beauty in tragedy: John Maitland's painting *Young Lovers* from his latest exhibition *Pure Gold***

World Youth Day events in Sydney, when the Pope visits in July.

None of the paintings in *Pure Gold* measures less than a metre in height or length, and prices range from \$5000 to \$11,000.

***Pure Gold*, Red Hill Gallery, 61 Musgrave Rd, Red Hill, Brisbane, from Wednesday until May 25; 10am-5pm Mondays to Fridays and 10am-4pm on weekends.**